

EARLY DAYS IN CLIMAX

REMINISCENCES
BY F. HODGMAN



1905

FOR USE IN
LIBRARY ONLY

HISTORY ROOM

977.417
H688

NOV 30 1967



FIRST SCHOOLHOUSE IN CLIMAX. 1836-1851

H
977.417
H688

Early Schools and Teachers in District No. 1, Climax.

*A paper read before the School Picnic Association
at the annual picnic, 1904.*

At the request of your president, I have prepared some accounts of the early schools in this district. About twenty-five years ago I wrote up a history of the township, at which time I got the school district records and obtained all the information I could from them, and got all I could from the old settlers then living in the vicinity. After collecting the material, I called these old settlers together at my house, and read it over to them. It was all talked over, and as finally written up it had their unanimous approval as being correct to the best of their recollections. It was published in Evarts and Abbotts' county history in 1880. I can add to this but little aside from personal reminiscences and anecdotes of little value as history, but which may serve to recall pleasant memories to the men and women who were the boys and girls in our school in the good old days of fifty years ago.

The first school in Climax was a private school taught by Silas Kelsey in the winter of 1834-5. It was held in an outhouse which was used by Judge Eldred as a milkhouse and summer kitchen. It stood on the opposite side of the street and only a few rods from the present school grounds. Judge Eldred paid Kelsey \$30 for teaching three months. I have never learned who attended that school, but I presume that it was got up by subscription and that Judge Eldred's younger children, Florinda, Nelson, Louise, and Catharine did so, and very likely children from some of the other families who had at that time settled in the vicinity,—the Spauldings, Shermans, Mulkins, Waterhouses, Farnsworths, or Lawrences.

The first *public* school was taught in the winter of 1836-7 after the district had been organized. It was at that time a part of the township of Comstock. As nearly as I can learn Daniel Lawrence was the first director of the district. One of the first happenings was a row about the schoolhouse. Judge Eldred had built him a new house and moved into it (the house since known as the Dr. Lovell house); so he sold his old one to the district for a schoolhouse. It stood about forty rods south of the corners

Early Days in Climax.

on the west side of the road not far from where Mrs. Olcha Lawrence now lives. He moved it south about forty rods on to the hill and fitted it up ready for use. Major Willard Lovell claimed that Eldred used his family influence to get an exorbitant price for the house and a bitter controversy ensued. As I remember it, the house was a small frame building not quite as large as one of the rooms of our present school building. There was a low attic overhead having a square opening into it through which the boys used to climb when the occasion seemed opportune. There was a row of desks fitted to the wall on three sides of the room and the teacher's desk standing out away from the wall on the north end near the single entry. This desk served also as a pulpit for the use of the minister when meetings were held there, as they were, up to the time the church was built in 1847. The first winter after the schoolhouse was fitted up it was used for a powerful revival, at which many of those living in the vicinity were converted and afterward gathered into the folds of the Baptist and Methodist churches. There were two rows of benches ranged around three sides of the room. The larger scholars sat on the back row of benches and when engaged in writing or using the desk sat with their faces to the wall. The smaller scholars sat on the front row of benches. These benches were made of slabs just as they came from the sawmill at Comstock, flat side up. They had holes bored into them slantwise, into which were driven legs made from the trunks of small saplings cut to the proper length. When complete, they looked like saw-horses a dozen feet or more long. They were all nearly of a height and it was no easy job for the little fellows to sit on them all day with their legs dangling and feet not touching the floor. In the center of the room was a big, heavy square box stove which took in wood two or three feet long. Each person who sent scholars to school had to furnish his share of the wood when notified. The result was that we had all sorts of wood and sometimes none at all. A block of wood about a foot long sawed off from a log a foot or so in diameter, and set up on end in the middle of the floor made a dunce block on which scholars who failed in their lessons had to sit till they learned them, objects of derision to the whole school. Sometimes in bad cases they had the label "dunce," pinned to their clothes in addition. The first time Charlotte Sheldon ever went to this school she was a stranger to everything and everybody. She created a sensation among the scholars by coming in when school was called and seeing no other seat vacant sitting down on the dunce block. It is needless to say the teacher soon found her another seat. Speaking of this reminds me that the usual way of calling school in those days was by taking a book or ruler and rapping on the window. A few of the teachers had hand bells of their own.

Early Days in Climax.

In those days the school expenses were paid by rate bills. The teacher kept account of the number of days each scholar attended school and at the close of the term apportioned the expense among the several patrons in proportion to the number of days their scholars attended school. When the rate bill was collected, the teacher got his pay. It used to be a common thing to take children out of school whenever things did not go just to suit the patron. By so doing they avoided paying any more school bill, and threw the burden on the remaining patrons. When one person set the example of taking scholars out of school, others were apt to follow, and schools were often ruined in that way. When the laws were changed so that every property owner had to pay his share of school expenses, whether he sent any one to school or not, the practise of taking scholars out of school for trivial grievances soon came to an end. If a man had to pay for the school any way, he would get all the benefit he could of it, and take his satisfaction out in growling about the teacher's "showing partiality" or doing some little thing he ought not to, or failing to do something he ought to do. But I was describing the school premises and got off on another track.

There was a little open space around and south of the schoolhouse where the Pierce Cemetery now is that we had for a playground. A large oak tree stood in the middle of it. Back of it was a thicket of hazel bushes. Woods and underbrush covered the entire forty acres or more to the south and west. Only a short distance from the school yard was the "old fort," its big ditch encircling the hill where we used to play we were Indians and make wigwams by bending saplings over and tying their tops together, and where we chased each other round and round the old ditch, bows and arrows in hand, and almost any old thing we could get as a substitute for a tomahawk.

The first school in the old schoolhouse was taught in the winter of 1836-7 by a man from Prairie Ronde named Hoyt. The measles broke up his school before it was half out. The next summer, Emily Harris taught the school for a five months' term. She was a daughter of Elder John Harris, the pioneer Baptist minister who lived in South Battle Creek at the time, and who for so many years ministered to the church in Climax. She later married George Willard, the well-known minister, journalist, and congressman of Battle Creek. Nearly all the settlers within two or three miles sent scholars to her school. I do not know of any one living who attended her school or the previous ones, except Sarah Jane Davis, Perry Nichols, and Darius Lay. Possibly Blackman Lawrence may be one. In the winter of 1837-8, Geo. W. Lovell, a brother of Enos T. Lovell, taught the school. Enos Lovell, Loren and Horace Pierce attended his school. Who else that is now living did so? The next summer Helen J. West

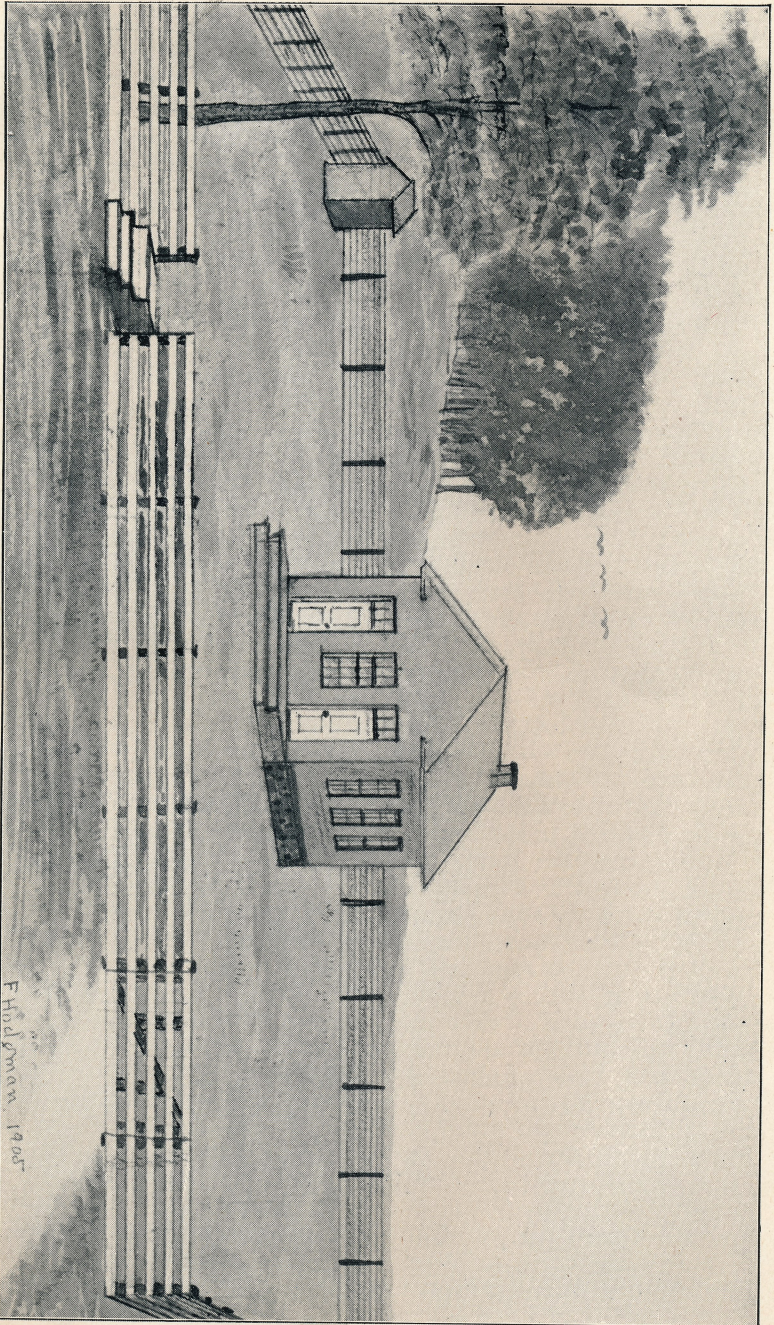
Early Days in Climax.

taught. I learned from the records some years ago that there were thirty-eight scholars in the district at that time and that the books in use were Webster's Elementary Spelling Book, English Reader, Historical Reader, Daboll's Arithmetic, Kirkham's Grammar, and Olney's Geography.

The next teacher was Florinda Eldred, a daughter of Judge Eldred's. Mary Lawrence, now Mary Tobey, went to her for her first schooling. The next teachers were Roxy Whitford and Nancy Whitford, sisters of the late Mrs. Nehemiah Elwell. Thomas Lawrence first went to school to them. Next came Blackman B. Nichols and Calista Potts, an aunt of Mrs. Fred Riley's.

All these schools were before my time, and all I know about them I have gathered from the records and from other people. The next winter was my first in school. How well I remember my first going to school. It was a clear frosty morning in November, 1843, with no snow on the ground. I was four years old that month. Mother had taught me at home and I knew my letters, could spell small words of two syllables, like baker, lady, shady, etc., from the spelling book, and could read short, easy sentences, like "When the cock crows, he makes a loud, shrill noise." We lived in a log house on the corner of Daniel B. Eldred's farm (afterward Sheldon's and now Mr. Morford's) about six or eight rods from where Geo. Cleveland's house now stands. That morning Gillett Spencer and Gustavus Eldred came along from Stephen Eldred's and stopped at our house on their way to school. Gustavus was Stephen Eldred's oldest son about my age or a trifle older, and Gillett Spencer, who was staying at Mr. Eldred's, was a brother of Mrs. Eldred and of Mrs. E. T. Lovell. When the boys got to our house, my brother Sam and I joined them, and we went across lots from there, direct to the schoolhouse. Ebenezer Bird was the teacher. The only thing I can remember of his school is of what took place that first day. There was a class of little fellows who, like me, had never been to school before,—five or six of us; I can not now tell who, but I think George Lawrence, Gustavus Eldred, Henry Bonney, and Rodney Page were of the number. The teacher sat down with a spelling book in his hand, called us up about his knees, and proceeded to teach us our A, B, C's. I was the last and smallest one in the class. The teacher went laboriously through the class teaching each one a few letters. When it came my turn, did I not show off my knowledge in great shape and was not I a proud little fellow? I was at once promoted to a higher class, and I felt so big about it that although more than sixty years have passed since then I have not quite got over it yet.

The next teacher was Minerva Miles. I can just remember her, but not a thing about the school. Then came I. J. Babcock in the winter of 1844-5. He was a young man studying medicine, strong and athletic and having a fiery temper, a man who was



SECOND SCHOOLHOUSE IN DISTRICT NO. 1, CLIMAX. 1852-1868

Early Days in Climax.

bound to have his way and feared nobody. He wielded the rod ferociously and none of us escaped it. Three unjust punishments that he inflicted while I went to school to him, burned themselves into my childish memory forever. The first case was that of Wirt Thayer, a fifteen-year-old boy, son of Dr. S. B. Thayer, who was then the physician of the place. Wirt was whipped with a stout hickory rod till the blood ran and he was streaked with welts from head to foot. The next case I remember was my own. I was a little kid five years old that winter. I had been whipped for idling away my time and ordered to study my lesson. I was studying as busily as I ever studied a lesson in my life when without a word of warning he laid the rod on me again. I wore an apron cut low in the neck and he left me with welts on my neck, shoulders, and back that were many days in healing. Then my brother Sam got it. He was a boy of fourteen at that time. He had been punished and sent home for some reason. Just before school closed for the day it was raining quite hard and mother sent Sam back to school with a cloak for me to wear home in the rain. For coming back with the cloak, Sam got nearly as bad a whipping as Wirt Thayer did. It is needless to say we did not go to his school any more. But for their injustice which so impressed itself on my mind I presume I should never have remembered these whippings any more than I have the many others that he dealt out to his scholars that winter. He afterward became a well-known physician, practising here and in Galesburg, where he also had a drug store and a farm near by. He finally sold out at Galesburg about 1866 and moved to Kalamazoo, where he practised his profession and ran a drug store the rest of his life.

The next summer (1845) Louise Eldred taught the school, and I carry only one remembrance of it. The measles broke out in the neighborhood. Gustavus Eldred, my special playmate, died of them. I caught them of him and nearly died too. I was taken sick in school, where I stayed wrapped in a shawl, on a bench, till school was out. Then I started home. I got as far as a point in the road about opposite where the present Baptist Church now stands when my strength failed and I could go no farther. My cousin, Ellen Sawyer, a big, stout girl, got me on her back with my arms around her neck and carried me home. Dr. Thayer was called. He bared my arm and thrust a lancet into it. The blood spurted out in a stream which mother caught in a bowl. Then came forgetfulness and three weeks passed out of my life never to return even in memory. When consciousness came back to me, I was lying in mother's bed with my playthings about me. I did not know I had been sick till I tried to raise myself in bed and could not. Mother lifted me and set me in a chair while she made the bed. I wanted a drink and tried to go and get it but only slipped off the chair and went sprawling on the floor.

The next winter (1845-6) Jacob Van Middlesworth taught the

Early Days in Climax.

school. I remember just one thing about his school. He was pretty rigid in his discipline, but not savage like Babcock. Owing to the manner in which the wood was furnished, we were frequently out of wood fitted for the stove, though there might be some of sled length in the yard, so they were under the necessity at times to either close the school or borrow an ax and cut some wood. So the ax was sometimes borrowed and the teacher and big boys cut up the wood. Among the big boys at that time were my brother Sam, Caleb Lawrence, Horace and Rowland Pierce. The latter used to go by the nick-names of "Rowl" or "Old Dad." Where George Sinclair now lives, there was then a log house in which Festus Hall, a shoemaker, lived. On the west side of the road between the schoolhouse and Hall's it was all woods. On the east side it had been recently cut over and there were many brush heaps waiting to be burned. One noon the teacher sent "Old Dad" to Hall's to borrow an ax to cut some wood. He was gone a long time and finally returned without it. "Jake," as we called him in after years, had found out that "Rowl" had borrowed the ax, brought it part way, and hid it in a brush heap, so he proceeded to give him a warming such as could not then be had from the stove. I can in my mind's eye see him now just as he laid it on, first a few strokes on the palm of the hand with a hickory gad, and then as the teacher warmed up to his work, a righteous good flogging on the back and legs. We used to go about imitating the performance in fun for a long time afterward. The next two summers, 1846 and 1847, the school was taught by Sarah Holden, only in 1847 she had changed her name and became Mrs. Nelson Eldred. The intermediate winter school was taught by R. H. Sutton. I remember the man, but nothing about his school. L. S. Eldred first went to school to him. I learned in after years that R. H. Sutton did some very bad surveying in Climax, evidently knowing little of the business. When Miss Holden taught, I was seven and eight years old. I learned very easily and so had plenty of spare time for mischief, which I improved thoroughly. She often said in after years that she could never catch me studying nor catch me without my lesson. I was one of the most troublesome scholars she ever had. Thomas Lawrence reminds me that she was the first one to introduce housecleaning by the scholars. Previously the schoolhouse had only been cleaned once a term before school began. She persuaded the scholars to spend one of their Saturday holidays cleaning house. We got a big kettle from Daniel B. Eldred's and brought water from there. The boys brought the water and heated it and the big girls, led by the teacher, went in with mops and brooms and rags and soft soap and sand and water and gave the whole room a thorough cleaning. It was the finest kind of a lark, and we enjoyed it better than any Saturday holiday for many a day and we were proud of our neat school room when it was done.

Early Days in Climax.

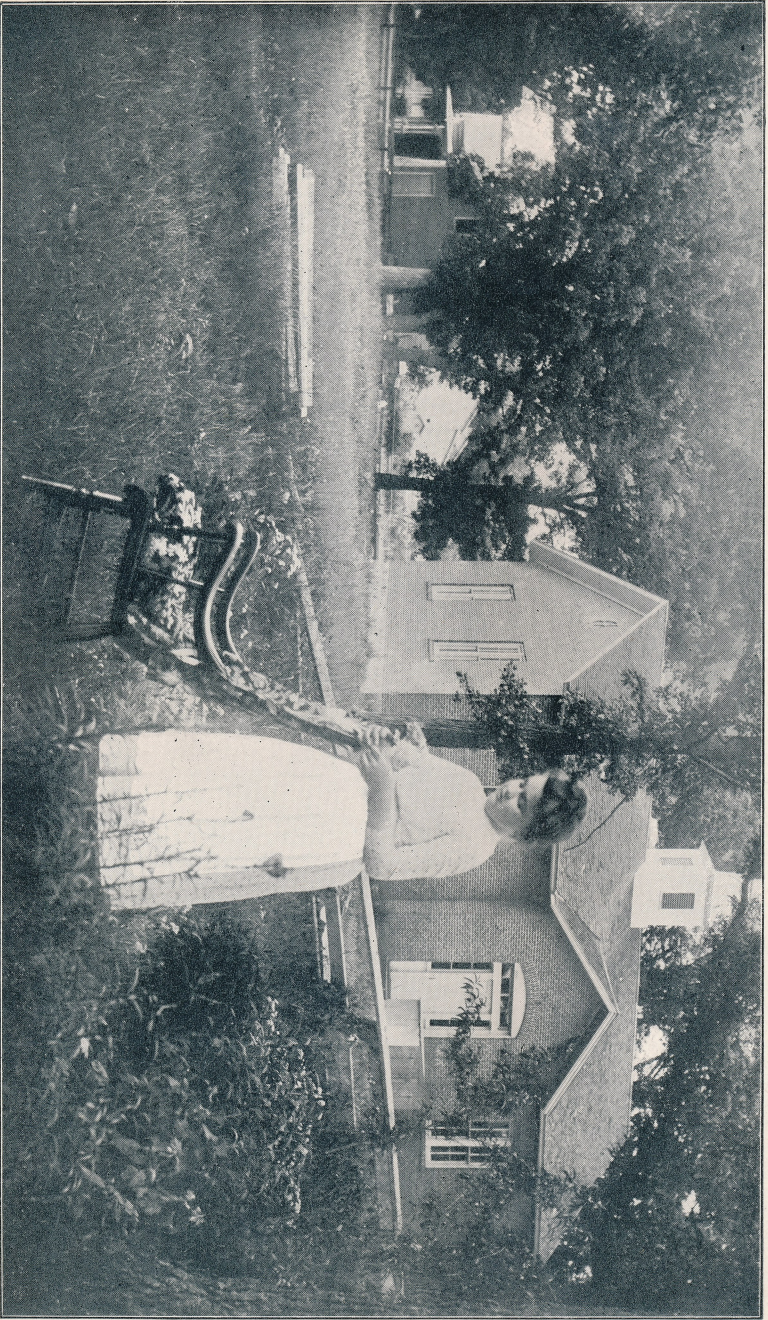
After that for a number of years we kept the house clean ourselves and took pride in it. On one of the housecleaning holidays a few years later some of the big boys caught a chicken and took it up to the school yard where some of the girls dressed and cooked it in a small iron kettle which had been borrowed from our place in the morning. Then they had a chicken feast which I refused to partake in. They tried to force it down me but couldn't. When it was over, I told them why I would not eat of their chicken. I had some conscientious scruples about eating stolen chicken anyway, but the main reason was that it had been cooked in a kettle which I had been feeding our pig in for months past, and they had not cleaned it out to suit me before they cooked the chicken. There was a crust of the pig feed sticking to the inside of the kettle yet.

In the winter of 1847-8 Louise Hawley, formerly Louise Eldred, began the term, but her health failing, the term was finished by Sarah Jane Davis, now Mrs. Atwood, oldest sister of the late Eben Davis. I am not entirely certain about that, but it is my recollection of it, and the records show that both taught that season. The next summer, 1848, Elizabeth Ransom taught. She was a daughter of Roswell Ransom, of Galesburg, a relative of the Lovell's. Then we had only every other Saturday for holiday and those days she took for a visit home. I have one incident to remember the school by, and only one. I have told of the whipping I got, and always remembered for its injustice, but of the many whippings I got in my school days Miss Ransom gave me one which I have remembered for a very different reason. One Monday morning when she came into school she startled us with a new fashion. Her hair was done up in a knot at the back of her head encircled and kept in place by a silken circlet made to resemble a braid of hair. We had never seen such a thing before and it attracted a good deal of attention, especially among the big girls. As she stood at her desk on the opposite side of the room and with her back to me I whispered to my mate, George Lawrence, calling his attention to the novel manner in which her hair was dressed. It was against the rule to whisper in school, but I trusted to my own smartness not to get caught at it. It failed me. I was caught and let off with a gentle reprimand. It piqued me a little, and more to show what I could do than anything else I watched my chance when her back was turned and whispered a second time, and the second time she caught me at it. That time I got a good hearty scolding. That piqued me still more. Thinks I, "I can whisper without her knowing it," so I watched my chance and tried it again, and the third time she caught me at it. Then she called me out on the floor, and gave me a thrashing that has stuck to my memory for fifty-six years.

The next winter (1848-9) Myron Towsley taught the school. He was an uncle of Frank Towsley who taught the school nearly

Early Days in Climax.

thirty years later. I remember the man, but remember but little about the school. Thomas Lawrence says he remembers him for striking Steenie Eldred a blow across the leg with a heavy ruler that hurt him terribly. "Steenie" says he does not remember it, but does remember some teacher throwing a heavy ruler across the room and hitting him a blow on the backbone that wilted him completely down. Electa Eldred taught the summer term in 1849. She was an adopted daughter of Uncle Potter Eldred who used to live half a mile west of Roofs Corners. She taught both that and the following summer and was very popular with the children. It was during one of her terms that the bear hunt took place. George Lawrence and I came early to school one morning and found the teacher and a few scholars already there out in the yard. Just then two bears jumped out of the woods a few rods from us and crossed the road into the opposite field. Father had a shoe shop at that time in the old "Farmer's Exchange," which stood on the corner where the Coe hotel recently burned. George and I ran down there and gave the alarm and everybody turned out instantly armed with any old gun or pitchfork or other weapon they could get hold of. When I got back to the schoolhouse, the two bears were playing together like kittens in the clover near where Arch Gould's house now stands. When the hunters began to assemble, the bears went back into the woods in spite of the efforts made to keep them out in the open field. It was astonishing the crowd that got together in a little while. It seemed as if everybody within several miles was there. They surrounded the woods to keep the bears from getting away and the best armed went in after the bears. In those days every farmer had a big tin horn which was used to call the men from the fields to their meals. A number of the hunters had dinner horns and blew them whenever a bear was sighted to let the others know where the game was. Dick Gavin, a Missouri hunter who was temporarily visiting in the place, killed the first bear within a few minutes after he entered the woods. He fired two shots, both taking effect. That was before the day of breech-loading guns and it was a matter of wonder and common talk for years afterward how quickly Gavin loaded his rifle and fired the second shot. The other bear gave the whole crowd a two-hour chase before he was finally brought down. What with the shouting and the blowing of horns and the firing of guns all in plain hearing you may readily imagine we children in the schoolhouse were not doing much studying nor did we preserve the best of order. Thirteen balls were fired through the second bear before it was finally brought down. My father fired the finishing shot from an old army musket that carried an ounce ball. It was an old revolutionary piece made in England and had gone through the wars with that country and also seen service in the Indian wars. Father



THIRD SCHOOLHOUSE IN DISTRICT NO. 1, CLIMAX. 1869-1890

Early Days in Climax.

brought it from New Hampshire with him. The bear was killed in a little opening around the pond which then filled the hollow this side of George Sinclair's. The bears were cut up and the meat distributed to every one who wanted it. The piece that father kept was tender and juicy and tasted much like fresh pork. The skin of that bear adorned father's stable door for a long time till at last a peddler came along and bought it. Father sold the old musket to George Sheldon. I wonder what ever became of the old revolutionary bear killing relic. It had a history, and Will Sheldon can tell you a story about it.

Speaking of the pond where the bear was killed, reminds me of an incident connected with it which was called to my attention by Thomas Lawrence. At that time water stood in the pond the year round, and pond lilies grew there, and bullfrogs and snakes and mud turtles inhabited it. The pond extended over both sides of the road and was spanned by a plank bridge over the deepest part. We boys used to sail on the pond and go under the bridge on rafts made of rails from the fence near by. We used to have a neat little school yard and were proud of it, but it was open to the commons. At that time animals of all sorts pastured in the commons. One morning when we came to school we found a big drove of hogs in the playground which they had rooted over and nastied generally. So the boys drove the hogs down the road to the pond. Some of them went ahead and took a few planks out of the bridge and turned another up slantwise to receive the hogs when they came. The other boys rushed the hogs on from the rear, and, like the hogs in the Bible story, every one of them went rushing into the pond, but none were drowned. At another time a herd of cattle occupied our playground overnight, much to the disgust of the scholars. So they made a halter and rope of withes and hickory bark and caught one steer and proceeded to exercise him. One of the boys, Tom Lawrence thinks it was Rodney Page, proposed to ride the steer and jumped on his back. Then there *was* fun. The steer plunged and ran, getting away from the boys who held the bark rope and then at full speed made for the woods the boy on his back yelling and the rest chasing after as fast as ever they could. When the steer got into the bushes, he soon got rid of his rider, I don't know how, but though the boy was well frightened he was not seriously hurt.

About that time we had another bit of fun which has remained in my memory. One early morning a boy found a big snapping turtle in the clover just back of the present school yard. I think I never saw a bigger one. He captured it and took it up to the schoolhouse and penned it in under the teacher's desk and stayed around until some other boys came. The teacher came early and got a good fright and promptly ordered the snapping turtle taken

Early Days in Climax.

out of the house. There was one of the scholars whom we used to call Well, or Wellie, who was a little younger than I. He was so much in fear of a dog or any other animal that if he saw one coming in the road he would climb over the fence and go a long way round to avoid it. Just as we got the turtle out of the house that morning we saw Wellie coming. We kept it out of sight till he got near when one of the boys picked the turtle up by the tail and ran after him with it. Such shrieking and yelling and tall sprinting as Wellie did to get away from the turtle is rarely heard or seen. It was the middle of the forenoon before he could be induced to come near the schoolhouse again and when he did he kept a mighty sharp eye out for that turtle.

The next winter (1849-50) my brother Samuel taught the school. I can only remember that he could not govern it. He was only nineteen and had to deal with pupils of his own age, some of whom were tolerably tough boys to deal with or handle, and they did pretty much as they had a mind to, in spite of him. In later years, when in the army, he showed that he could govern men, but I imagine he never found it so hard to handle his company on or off the battle-field as he did to govern that little district school at home.

The summer of 1850 Electa Eldred again taught the school. It was in these days that Judge Eldred used to treat the children to apples. The children all called him Grandpa and he was Grandpa to most of them. The men called him the "Old Judge," but if anybody spoke of Grandpa everybody knew that he was the person meant. He had an orchard which had just nicely come into bearing which extended from the Baptist Church grounds south to the burying ground or within a dozen rods of the schoolhouse. In it there was a great variety of apples, good, bad, and indifferent. There were a few trees bearing beautiful, luscious, yellow, harvest apples. As soon as they were well ripened "grandpa" would carry big baskets full of them up to the school. He would come just before letting out of school at night and they were distributed around to every one alike, so that every one had a share. It was the biggest kind of a treat for the children, for there were but few orchards in bearing in those days and such fruit as that was scarce.

The next winter (1850-51) Ebenezer Flanders taught the school. He was a short, humpbacked man and lived on the north road to Galesburg. I think the punishments in those days must have made a greater impression on my mind than almost anything else, for the only thing I remember of his school was a punishment which took place in a spelling class. In those days the spelling and reading classes stood up in a row on the floor kept in line by toeing a chalkmark or a crack between the floor boards. When spelling, the teacher pronounced the words to each one of

Early Days in Climax.

the class in succession from the head of the class to the foot. If a word was missed, it passed to the next, and so on down the class, till it was spelled correctly, when the successful speller took the place next above the one who first missed it or perhaps at the head of the class. The one who left off at the head of the class at night took the place at the foot next day. A record was kept and the scholar who left off at the head the most times during the term held the honors of the championship and sometimes a prize was added. In my time it was pretty nearly a sure thing that either Sarah Le Fever or I would win. My story now is about that boy Wellie of whom I have already told you. One day he was near the head of his class and missed the first word that came to him. After that he missed every word till he was at the foot. Flanders had become convinced that the boy was missing words purposely and said to him, "Don't you miss the next one." The next word was an easy one of four letters and the boy missed it in such a way that we all knew he did it on purpose. Flanders stepped in front of him, drew his arm back at full length and dealt the boy a swinging blow on the side of his face and ear with his open hand. The boy went to the floor as if hit by a cannon ball. When he got up, his spelling was greatly improved and he did not miss another word for several days. Following Flanders in the year 1851 Esther Rouse taught the school. Father sent me to Battle Creek to school that summer and I remember very little what was going on in our own district. A new schoolhouse of brick was built that year right in the middle of our playground and the big tree we used to play under was taken out. The old schoolhouse was moved across the road, sold to Robert Elwell, and once more made into a dwelling. A few years later it took fire and burned down. Mary Ann Mason taught the first school in the new schoolhouse the winter after it was built. She was a daughter of Deacon Isaac Mason, who was a shining light in the Baptist Church and worked the Hiram Moore farm previous to its sale to Dewitt C. Reed. I remember Miss Mason very well but nothing about her school. The next summer (1852), Diana Hall, a daughter of Festus Hall, taught the school. She was an efficient and popular teacher, much liked by her scholars. She was the first teacher, I think, to introduce music into the school. She was a fine singer, and every day under her teaching was enlivened with song. How we did enjoy singing the many songs that she taught us. At the close of the school she got teams and took the whole crowd out for a ride. We went down the road singing at the tops of our voices, a happy crowd if there ever was one. I wonder if there is any one here to-day who was in that crowd. I think Miranda Adams was and perhaps Steenrod Eldred. Who else? I was getting to be a good sized lad a dozen years old at this time and did not go to school much more in the summer. I had to work

Early Days in Climax.

and did work around on the farms at 25 cents a day, and father had the pay till I was seventeen years old, after which I had my own wages and shifted for myself. Along in those early days there were several private or select schools taught here which gave higher instruction than could be had in the public school and I attended them more or less as I could when not at work. The first of these was taught in the old "Farmer's Exchange," on the corner where the recent fire was. It was taught by Mary Norris, of Battle Creek. The next was taught by Geo. A. Chapine, who lived and had his school in what is now known as the Buckberry House in 1852. Immediately after this J. L. McCloud, a Baptist minister, lived and taught a school in what is now known as the Hall House. I studied Latin under both these teachers and Chapine tried to have me study Greek. The school in the winter of 1852-3 was taught by Wm. L. Stark and while I remember the man and the school very well there is no particular incident connected with it in my memory. The same may be said of the schools in the succeeding winter taught by Chas. Rhodes and in the summer of 1853 and 1854 by Lucy Palmer and Amy Bailey. In the winter of 1854-5 Ann Bellows taught the school. My brother Charley calls to my mind an incident of her school when one of the boys got very unruly and she pulled a piece of lath from the side of the room and belted him with that until he saw the error of his ways and promised better behavior. The summer schools of 1856 and 1857 were taught by Elizabeth Spafford. I did not attend them. The last teacher I went to in the district school was Miles Seeley, a brother of Dr. O. F. Seeley, who taught in the winter of 1855-6. Nearly a dozen years later a younger brother of his taught the school. Neither of them was a successful teacher or could govern this school. I believe Miles Seeley was a conscientious, honest man, who tried his very best, but there were a lot of big boys and big girls too, who were ready and quick to take advantage of his weak points. The boys in those days were strong, sturdy fellows whose every-day sport was to wrestle and jump and try all sorts of feats of strength. There was never a recess or a nooning went by without something of the kind going on, and if a boy came on a visit from another school somebody of his size had to down him. I used to see more wrestling in a single day then than I now see in our school yard in a year. We used to find out in a short time what caliber a schoolmaster was made of, and it did not take us long to find out that there were a number of us who were more than a match for Mr. Seeley in a test of physical strength and skill. One day in a friendly scuffle with him I put him on his back in the wood box in the entry way. If he had only had the moral strength, he could have governed us well enough, but there he was lacking, and the tears would run down his face as he realized how impotent he was to rule us. It has



FOURTH SCHOOLHOUSE IN DISTRICT NO. 1, CLIMAX. 1891

Early Days in Climax.

been one regret of my life that in those last days of my school life I was not strong enough in moral purpose to make the best use of my opportunities instead of joining with others as I did in wasting them. I never went to a district school again and I will not try to trace this history any further. Those of us now living who attended school in the first brick schoolhouse on the hill are past the midsummer of life and verging on the autumn. Those who went to school in the old wood schoolhouse are in the autumn and winter of life. Who knows what has become of all the boys and girls of fifty years ago? We know that many of them have passed over to the other side and the rest are scattered far and wide. Perhaps if I call over the names that occur to me of those who attended school in the first old wood schoolhouse it may bring to mind others and recall pleasant memories in the minds of those who were their playmates in the days of long ago and with these names I will close this paper.

From Judge Caleb Eldred's came Florinda, Nelson, Louise, and Katharine.

From Stephen Eldred's came Gustavus and Wellington.

From Thomas Eldred's came Steenrod, Estella, and Delaune.

From Caleb Eldred's, Jr., came Eugene and Louise.

From Alfred Eldred's came Philander and Chester.

From Deacon Dan Eldred's came John Retallick and Henrietta Ralph.

From Daniel B. Eldred's came Hiram, Richard, and Jane.

From Isaac Pierce's came Loren, Paulina, Janet, Horace, Rowland, Willard, Lucinda, and Angeline.

From Lawrence Pierce's came John Emery.

From Walter Bonney's came Emerson, Abner, William, Henry, Laura, Relief, Mary Jane, and Alvah.

From Page's came Elvira, Elmina, James, and Rodney.

From Joseph Riddles's came Leroy, Melville, and Albert.

From Festus Hall's came Urzelia, Diana, Ann, Mary, and James.

From S. B. Thayer's came Wirt and Virgil.

From Isaac Davis's came Sarah Jane, Amanda, Miranda, Ezra, and Eben.

From David Gutcheus's came Sally, David, and Harriet.

From John Holden's came Clarissa and Melvina.

From P. S. Lamb's came Alice and Adelaide.

From Bidwell's came Horace, Alvaser, and two girls, names forgotten.

From Geo. Sheldon's came Charlotte, Eli, and Edward.

From M. Hodgman's came Samuel C., Francis, and Charles.

From Daniel Lay's came Darius, Darwin, and William.

From H. Howard's came John and Jane.

From D. Lawrence's came Blackman, Thomas, Caleb, Mary, and George.

Early Days in Climax.

From W. E. Sawyer's came Louise, Ellen, Helena, Eliza, Gertrude, and William.

From J. N. Lefever's came Sarah and Magdalen.

From Paul Geddes's came James and Albert.

From N. Elwell's came Homer and Maria.

From Wm Pray's came Horace and Emily.

From the two Butler's came Charles, Abram, Absalom, Abner, and Thomas.

From N. Spicer's came David, Mary, Jane, James, and Crandall.

From M. Cole's came Eunice, Esther, Marietta, and Lovina.

From W. E. Bellows's came Ann, Marian, Jane, Susan, and Agnes.

From John Clermont's came Wm. H., Abner, and Lewis.

From H. Stimpson's came Adelia and Amelia.

Other names which occur to me are the children of the Waterhouse family, Lovina Beach, Corydon Beach, Orange Beach, Lovisa Johnson, John Haas, Kate Haas, Andrew Chipman, Gillett Spencer, Sol. Grimes, Henry Sears, Minerva Best, Cyril White, Ann Beadle, Wm. Van Valkenburg, Martin Nichols, and Perry Nichols.

The Old Landmark of Our Village.

Written for the Climax Cereal, 1902.

The talk of erecting a brick block on the site of what is known as the Ide building and the consequent removal of that building suggests to the writer that possibly it may be of interest to the readers of the *Cereal* to recall some of the buildings which have come and gone within the village limits since its first settlement.

A complete history of some of those buildings with only short sketches of the different people who have occupied them, would make a book of itself.

One of the first buildings to be erected and disappear was a log house on what is now the Sheldon farm. It stood nearly opposite Morris Roof's residence and back in the lot near where a peculiar double burr oak tree now stands. It was built by Daniel O. Dodge in 1832. In it Dodge's child was born and died — the first birth and the first death in the township of Climax. After the child's death the mother nursed a young fawn, to which she became greatly attached, petting it like a child. When the fawn grew older it became a nuisance and had to be killed. What became of the house the writer does not know. It had disappeared before 1844. Possibly E. T. Lovell or T. B. Eldred could tell what became of it.

Another residence built in 1832 was that of Judge Caleb Eldred, which stood not far from the present residence of Mrs. Squiers. It was occupied by the Judge's family until 1836 when it was sold to the school district, moved onto the hill where the Pierce cemetery now is, and transformed into a schoolhouse. In it the first school was taught in the winter of 1836-7 by a man named Hoyt, and the next summer by Emily Harris, daughter of Elder John Harris, the pioneer Baptist minister. The next winter (1837-38) the school was taught by Geo. W. Lovell, brother of Enos T. Lovell. The building was used as a schoolhouse until 1851. In it the writer and a few others of our townspeople got their first schooling. Then it was moved again to the opposite side of the street and converted into a dwelling once more. Robert Elwell owned and occupied it for many years until it burned up. Another dwelling erected on its site is now occupied by Mrs. Willis.

Another early residence was that of C. W. Spaulding, which was built in 1832 and stood some distance back of the old farm-

Early Days in Climax.

house now owned and occupied by Mrs. Ransom. Spaulding sold it to Isaac Pierce in 1835. How long the old house stood, or what its fate was, the writer does not know, but it probably stood until well along into the 40's, when the first part of the present farm-house was built. Another house close by it was occupied by Levi Pierce.

As long ago as the writer can remember, a log house stood on the corner of the Sheldon farm within five or six rods of where Geo. Cleveland's new house is to stand. Who it was built for, when it was built, or when it was removed, the writer does not know, but many of his earliest recollections in life are connected with that building when it was his home and when Daniel B. Eldred owned the Sheldon farm.

More than half a century ago John J. Rice, a tailor, built a house on the corner now occupied by the Ide building. After living in it and keeping shop in it for several years he sold it, if the writer remembers aright, to Reuben L. Coe, who kept tavern in it and taught dancing school and fiddled for dances. Later John Clermont kept hotel in it. He had three sons, the youngest one of whom was at one time one of the most noted swindlers and forgers in the United States. The building came into possession of Wm. E. Sawyer about 1854. He lived in it and kept a small stock of general merchandise. A year or two later it burned down and Sawyer erected the present building in its stead.

A little over fifty years ago a man named Charles Butler built a house where J. D. Bucklin now lives. He only lived in it a year or two, and then it passed into the hands of E. Packer, of Battle Creek, who leased it to tenants. One of the most vivid recollections of the writer's early boyhood was concerning one of those tenants, named Henry Mason. He was a blacksmith, and like some others, both before and since then, drank altogether too much liquor for his own good. One winter night he was taken with delirium tremens and went up and down the streets yelling like a demon, and going into people's houses all along the road. He came into father's house just after we children had gone to bed, and nearly frightened us out of our senses with his demoniac cursing and yelling. It took a number of strong men to watch him and prevent his doing serious injury to his family. Not long afterwards the house caught fire and burned down, while occupied as a residence by Truman Dewey.

Another of the old dwellings which were built half a century ago was one erected by Cyrus Hewitt on what is now called the Finout lot. Hewitt was a peddler who went about the country with a horse and light wagon selling pins and needles, and thread and buttons and pens and other notions that could be carried in that way. He did not keep the place very long, and among those who lived in it were Wm. J. Greenleaf, Abner Bonney, and Court-

Early Days in Climax.

land E. Dean. The latter sold it to Charles Brown just before the war of the rebellion, and he made it his home for the remainder of his life. Its destruction by fire is so recent as to be remembered by all but the newest comers.

When Reuben L. Coe sold out to Sawyer he bought a lot on the other side of the street and put up a house near where the drug store now stands. After some years it came into the possession of Hiram Wolcott, who, after living in it a while, moved it to the south part of the village onto the lot now owned by G. Wheeler. Later it came into the possession of Edmond Ingalls, who died there. Then for a time it was occupied by tenants until one day, while Mark Beadle was living there, it took fire and burned.

These are some of the old residences of our village which have served their purpose and passed away. There are others still standing but not where they were originally built. Such for instance is Old Mrs. Taylor's house, which was built by a man named Calkins and originally stood on the west side of Main Street about fourteen rods north of the "Corners." Another is the residence of Harvey Beals, which was built by Wm. E. Sawyer in 1843 or 1844 in the corner lot now occupied in part by the Coe Hotel, now Hotel Wilson. Another is Arch Gould's house which was once Stephen Eldred's farmhouse, and still another is Mrs. Fannie Tobey's house, which was once Daniel B. Eldred's barn and stood back in the field forty rods south of the house where W. H. Sheldon now lives. Other buildings of a more public character which have passed away and are worthy of further mention to save them from oblivion are the Farmers' Exchange, the Ashery, the sawmill and the Masonic Hall.

There was one notable building in the early history of the village which deserves a notice, that belonged to neither of the classes mentioned in the previous article. It was Judge Eldred's big barn. It was built in 1833, and stood just back of where George McIlvain's barn now stands. It was 40 x 80 feet in size with 20-foot posts and massive timbers. When it was raised people were gathered from all the settlements in the vicinity, including Goguac, Gourdneck, Gull, and Tolland prairies and, there not being white men enough, the Indians turned in and helped at the raising. When the big building was up the Indians looked in astonishment at its huge proportions and went about exclaiming "majash wigwam." Asa Jones of Gull Prairie was the boss carpenter and everything went up without a hitch. A raising in those days meant a "big time" and as this was a big raising and a big crowd they had a "big time" to match. Big as the barn was, it was filled to overflowing with wheat the first year. It served its purpose in the place where it was built for some thirty or forty years and then it was cut in two. One half

Early Days in Climax.

was moved back and is now Mrs. Mary Smith's big barn here in the village. The other half was suffered to rot down where it stood, and the last vestige of it has been gone for fifteen or twenty years.

Of the business buildings the earliest was the "Farmers' Exchange," a store building built by Daniel B. Eldred some time in the late thirties. It stood across the way from Eldred's house (now Sheldon's) not far from what is now known as the Pond residence. Eldred kept a general stock of such goods as were required by the settlers at that time, including liquors, for which he took out a license in May, 1840. The old building had a checkered career and there are doubtless those who know its history better than the writer does. Wm. E. Sawyer came into possession of it in 1843 or 1844, and carried on the store business where it stood for a year or more. Then he moved it onto the corner where Coe's hotel now stands. While standing there it served various purposes. Sawyer used it for a store; Moses Hodgman for a shoe shop and dwelling; Wiseman and Mills for a store and tailor shop; Harvey Lent for a dwelling and whisky saloon, etc. The property on that corner went back into the hands of Isaac Pierce some time about 1860. Then the old store was moved a few rods north out of the way and the hotel was built in its place. It hardly stayed there long enough to get rested, when it was moved north again to a point about opposite John Sherman's, where it was used for a barn. When the Peninsular Railroad came to town the old store made its last move, being taken down to the track and used for a depot until it was torn down and a better one built in its place. Early in its history it had a coat of yellow paint put on it which lasted its lifetime. On the front was painted the word "STORE" and on each side beneath the eaves in big black letters which reached the entire length of the building were the words "FARMERS' EXCHANGE" and in small letters the name of the painter, J. Miller.

While the building stood on the corner it for nearly a year served as a background to show off a tall stalk of corn. The corn was raised by Geo. Sheldon from seeds brought from the South. This stalk grew in what is now Dr. Seely's garden, or near there. It was nailed up beside the door in front of the store and reached from the platform to the peak of the roof, measuring 17 feet 6 inches in length. There are a number of people yet living who well remember that long stalk of corn.

Wm. E. Sawyer was a man of great energy and push and during the time that he lived at the "Corners" he did more than any other three men to build up the village. About the same time that he built the Beals house and moved the store into the corner he built an ashery and manufactured potash. The building stood

Early Days in Climax.

somewhere near where the north side of Maple Street is intersected by the street to the depot. How long the ashery was run I do not know. My father was in some way connected with Sawyer in his business, both in the ashery and the store. One night Wm. Pray, who had been drawing ashes, was at our house to supper. Among other things mother had warm biscuits and maple syrup for supper. The syrup was in a cream pitcher. At the supper table Pray, after pouring out some of the syrup, noticed a drop hanging from the pitcher. He thrust out his tongue and lifted the pitcher almost to his mouth, when noticing some of us looking at him he suddenly bethought himself and set the pitcher down with the remark, "Gaul, I liked to licked it off before I thought." The expression was a byword in our family for years afterward.

Another of Sawyer's enterprises was a steam sawmill which he built about the same time. It stood back of and a little west of the ashery. Like most of the sawmills of those days it was a heavy, cumbrous affair of two stories, built of big massive timbers heavy enough to support a railroad train. Most of the machinery was in the lower story and the logs were hauled up a sloping tramway to the upper story for sawing. The saw was hung in a heavy sash and it took all the steam from two cylinder boilers to run it fast enough to cut out 2,500 to 3,000 feet of lumber per day. The mill was well patronized and it was the usual thing in winter to have the yard and the roadway for a long distance each way filled with saw logs of the finest quality of whitewood, ash, walnut, cherry, basswood, and oak timber. The mill did business for twenty-five years or more and then went to decay and was torn down. Sawyer only ran it three or four years and then sold it to Gen. Cady, of Battle Creek. After that it changed hands frequently, and a good many men had a turn at owning or running it. Among them were Amos Best, Jacob Van Middlesworth, John Mitchell, M. Mix, Geo. Reno, W. B. Seymour, C. B. Guchess, Ezra Davis, and others.

The last of the departed landmarks to which I shall refer is, or was, the Masonic Hall. This was built by the Masons in 1862 on the corner where L. T. Clark's store now stands. It was a two-story building with store and shop room below and the Masonic Hall and a dwelling room above. In 1862 it was sold to M. Hodgman, except the hall. He in turn sold it to his son, C. E. Hodgman, who occupied it for several years as a dwelling, store, shoe shop, and postoffice. On January 13, 1878, it burned down. At the time of the fire, aside from the hall, it was occupied by John Wardell drug store, Moses Hodgman shoe shop, F. Hodgman, county surveyor's office, and W. Ashby, dwelling.

Aside from the buildings which have been mentioned a barn was once burned down a little east of where Luce's livery barn

Early Days in Climax.

now stands, so that in the history of the village three out of the four main corners have been visited by destructive fires. In writing these sketches of our missing landmarks, our "ships that have passed in the night," the author has depended mainly on his memory. The statements made in a general way may be relied upon, but there may be some errors as to dates or persons which perhaps some of our citizens can correct. If so the writer will be glad to have them corrected.

The Old Fort.

*Written for the Michigan Pioneer and Historical Society, held at Lansing,
Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday, June 5, 6, 7, 1902.*

I have been asked to give this society an account of a prehistoric fort at Climax. There is very little to be told beyond the statement that within the present limits of the village of Climax there once existed something which for the want of a better name or of any knowledge of its purpose the early settlers called the "old fort."

The village of Climax is situated on the prairie from which it takes its name nearly at the summit of the watershed between the valleys of St. Joseph and Kalamazoo Rivers. It is said to be the highest point on the line of the Grand Trunk Railroad between Port Huron and Chicago. The so-called fort occupied the crest of a knoll in the southwest part of the village. This is probably the highest ground in the township of Climax and does not vary much in elevation from 1,000 feet above sea level. It overlooks the surrounding country for a considerable distance in all directions and is about 100 rods distant west of south from the center of the village, the quarter Section corner for Section 2 and 3, Township 3 South, Range 9 West.

The first settlements were made here in 1831. At that time the country in the vicinity was all of it either prairie or oak openings with no undergrowth of bushes or small timber. The knoll was covered with large oak trees without any undergrowth. The open country all around it showed everywhere evidences of former cultivation. There were numerous mounds in the vicinity, nearly all of which have been destroyed and leveled with the earth. Some of them contained bones and other human relics. The garden beds, so called, occupied most of the open ground for a mile around. They were marked by trenches or paths several inches deep which parted the land off into the different tracts. These paths were from one to three feet wide. The beds were irregular in size and shape and not laid in straight lines. They also laid in various directions and at different angles with each other as if the land had been parceled out and worked by different owners. The paths were deep enough so that when the ground was plowed the plow would run out of the ground in crossing them and their location could be plainly seen in the freshly plowed ground for many years after its settlement. The

Early Days in Climax.

knoll rose in the midst of these "garden beds." I first knew it in 1844. Nearly the entire field of forty acres in which it stood was then covered with oak timber from one to three feet in diameter and a thick undergrowth of oak, hickory, and hazel which had sprung up within the last dozen years since the annual fires which formerly swept over the whole country had been stopped. Around the summit of the knoll was a ditch two or three feet deep and ten or twelve feet wide, with the earth from it banked up on the sides, making it very plain and distinct and easily traced. Large trees were growing in its bottom and along its banks, showing that a long time had elapsed since its construction.

The first schoolhouse in the town of Climax was only a few rods away, where, when a little boy of four years old I first attended school and where as years passed along I got nearly all the common school education I ever had. In that field was our playground and it was a favorite pastime of the school children to make believe we were Indians and chase each other round and round in that old ditch.

Many were the speculations as to who dug it and what for, but nobody knew anything about it. Because of its form and the commanding position it occupied it was commonly known as the old fort. But that was only conjecture. The ground it occupied has been cleared and cultivated for many years and the old ditch is for the most part filled up. A few of us who knew every foot of the ground in our younger days can now go on the ground and trace out its location but a stranger would fail to find it. It is now rarely mentioned in the village; and it is probable that very many people living within half a mile of the old fort never knew there was such a thing there.

A quarter of a century ago I made a survey of the old ditch and found that its form was that of a perfect ellipse, or oval enclosing 13-10 acres of the summit of the hill. Its major axis pointed north 30 degrees east. Its greater diameter is 330 feet and the lesser diameter 210 feet. Its site is shown in the backgrounds of the pictures of the two first schoolhouses in the district.

In some local historical verses written about that time the poet thus refers to the old fort:—

"The time's but an instant, a quick fleeting breath
Compared with time since the angel of death
Laid the mound builders low whose work we may still
See encircling the ground at the top of the hill.
Men call it the fort; but can any one tell
Why that circular ditch was there laid out so well?
Did the mound builders once stand in battle array
And fight at the fort as we call it to-day?"

Early Days in Climax.

Or was it a spot where by moonlight the fairy
Would dance on the knoll overlooking the prairie?
It was one time our playground. The old schoolhouse stood
On the hill by the graveyard, and there was the wood
Where we wandered and clambered the hazels among
And played we were Indians and hunted and sung.
How often that ditch we then followed around;
We knew every sapling and tree on the ground;
The trees are now gone and the ditch will soon fill,
But ever in memory we'll cherish them still."

The ditch has filled. There are a very few of us who played there in childhood left to cherish the memory of the old fort and the happy days spent there. But the little mounds on the hill at its side will soon cover us too. We shall mingle our dust with that of the men who built the fort and in days to come will be no more known than they are now.

**History Room
Not For Loan**

The Moore Harvester.

One day in 1898 I picked up a paper which contained an account of the great harvesting machines used in California. Not long after that I received a newspaper clipping which said, "The latest and most wonderful thing in the line of harvesting machinery is the invention of Mr. J. W. Conroy. It cuts the grain and threshes it simultaneously." Then followed a description of the machine which brought vividly to my mind the days of my boyhood, sixty years ago, when I, with crowds of others,—men, women, and children, some of whom are still living in this vicinity,—gathered in what is now known as the George Roof place to watch the great prototype and progenitor of all harvesting machines as drawn by twenty horses it swept around the big field, cutting a fifteen-foot swath and delivering the grain in bags ready for the market faster than two teams could draw it to the granary. On one of these days (and Sunday at that) this machine harvested 1,100 bushels of wheat.

Its inventor, Hiram Moore, was born in Shirley, Mass., July 19th, 1801. When he was ten years old his father moved to Dalton, in northern New Hampshire, where he located and settled on a farm on the high table land overlooking the valley of the Connecticut River and in full view of the picturesque ranges of the White and Franconia mountains in New Hampshire and the Green mountains in Vermont. The elder Moore was an expert workman in monumental stone cutting and taught his boys the trade which Hiram worked at in Vermont and in Savannah, Ga., until the spring of 1831, when he and his brother, Lovell Moore, came to Michigan and located lands at Comstock, Tollands Prairie, and Climax Prairie, at Tollands buying out a squatter on what is now the county poor farm. Hiram Moore was one of the party of four who visited Climax that spring and gave the prairie its name. Later in the season John and Lovell Moore brought their families to Michigan and built a house at Tollands Prairie with a shake roof, log puncheons for lower floor and flat rails for the chamber floor. There was not a sawed board in the building. How many who read this have any idea what a shake roof is, or a puncheon floor? Then they built a sawmill at Comstock, only four miles from what now is the city of Kalamazoo. Only a few miles away lived John Hascall, who had just moved in from New York, a man of an inventive turn of mind.

Early Days in Climax.

As things then were, he and Moore were considered near neighbors, and being men of similiar tastes, they often visited back and forth. One day when Hascall's first crop of wheat was being harvested, the two were watching the cradlers at their work when Hascall said to Moore, "Why can not some machine, drawn by horses, be made to cut the grain and save all this hard, hot labor." E. Lakin Brown of Schoolcraft said to the writer that Hascall also outlined in a general way how he thought such a machine might be made. Mr. Brown was an intimate friend of both and had good opportunity for knowing about the invention. Hascall's question set Moore to thinking, and from that time, 1832, until the machine was perfected twenty years later, Moore's mind, means, and time were fully occupied with it. He put his own means into it and all that he could borrow from his friends and they all lost heavily by it. Hascall, who first suggested it and who aided Moore by his advice and suggestions, was ruined by it.

The first conception of the harvesting machine included only the cutting of the wheat. The general problem was not a difficult one for an inventive mind like Moore's and he set immediately about it, making plans and experimenting in various ways. The great difficulty met him right at the thresh-old—to devise something which would cut the grain. All the rest was easy. He first tried a straight smooth edged knife with a reel to hold the grain against it; next a straight sickle edged knife (which the writer now has a part of); next a scalloped smooth edged knife like those now used in mowers; then two such knives reciprocating in opposite directions and then a scalloped sickle, but they all failed. The grain would slip away from them.

Then came the invention of the fingers or guards. He made them of wood with a narrow steel plate for the knife to slide on and another plate just over the knife which kept the grain from sliding away. That solved the problem and it is claimed that this was the first scalloped sickle with slotted finger guards ever made. While this preliminary work was being done, Moore made his home with his brother at Comstock, but spent a portion of his time at other places, at one time boarding at Mr. Cuming's on Tolland Prairie, where Mr. J. R. Cumings still lives (June 1901) on the same farm that he did when Moore boarded at his father's almost seventy years ago.

In August, 1834, Moore was married at Gull Prairie by Elder Knappen to Harriet West Fogg, a sister of Lovell Moore's first wife. The property owned by the Moore brothers was divided up and to Hiram's share fell the Climax Prairie land now owned and occupied by Geo. Roof, and there he settled with his bride. For twenty years that was his home and there he did

Early Days in Climax.

most of his studying and experimenting to develop the machine.

This work led him away from home a great deal of the time as practically all of the mechanical work had to be done elsewhere. His first machine was built and set up at Flowerfield and used on Prairie Ronde. It was a crude affair and delivered the grain in the chaff in boxes which had to be changed as often as filled. E. Lakin Brown thought there were as many as three of these crude preliminary machines made.

In 1836 the machine was patented as a whole. From Hascall's idea of a machine simply to cut the grain and deliver it in gavels ready to bind, it had gradually grown under Moore's hand to a complete harvester, but by no means complete when his patent was issued. It had, however, within it even then the basic inventions which have been used in every successful grain cutting or threshing machine from that day until this. There has been a good deal of controversy as to whether Moore was the first inventor of some of these devices, but whether that be so or not they were, so far as he was concerned, original inventions of his and they came from his hands practically perfect as they are used to-day. He invented them himself and he did not steal some other person's inventions.

Lovell Moore, Jr., a nephew of Hiram Moore, in writing of these early inventions says, "Uncle Hiram boarded with us over a year. I saw him and heard him talk nearly every day and it was nearly all about his plans for a machine to cut grain by horse power. He was drafting plans half the time." After describing the invention of the sickle and the guards he says, "At this time he had only thought of cutting the grain and delivering it in bundles at the side ready for binding but he soon began to plan for threshing and separating, but that part, the bar cylinder, the elevating part, the slip gear, chain belts, etc., all of his invention, is too great a task for me to write out." Among those who aided financially in developing the harvester were Aaron K. Burson of Schoolcraft who put a couple of thousand dollars into it, and one of Michigan's first and ablest statesmen, United States Senator Lucius Lyon. Lyon had been a government surveyor and was then a wealthy man and full of projects for improvements. While he was helping Moore with his invention, he was also starting and operating the first salt works in the state at Grand Rapids and trying to establish a beet sugar factory at White Pigeon. It was Lyon's idea that Moore should take out patents on the several parts of the machine as they were invented. Moore's failure to do so practically lost him all the fruits of his inventions and made millionaires of others who appropriated them. Moore and his friends always claimed that McCormick had the opportunity and appropriated whatever he chose of Moore's inventions when he got out his own

Early Days in Climax.

machine in 1834. Within the next ten years a number of harvesting machines were patented, some or all of which made use of Moore's inventions. On March 3d, 1844, Senator Lyon, who then had a large interest in the harvester, wrote to Moore enumerating several of these patents and saying, "I should think your safest plan would be to patent your improvements separately. I fear you have been anticipated in some of them." Lovell Moore writes me, "I am sure Uncle Hiram patented his machine as a whole and nobody wanted it as a whole, but when his patent expired and he asked congress for a renewal, he was met by a host of machine makers who wanted the important parts and his bill was defeated. McCormick spent \$40,000 to defeat it." Albert Little, Esq., of Richland, a relative of Moore by marriage, told the writer that he well remembers hearing Moore say that McCormick had made him an offer of \$30,000 for the use of his inventions but that they were worth more and McCormick had got to pay full value. Lovell Moore further writes, "After constructing a crude machine at Flowerfield, Uncle went to Rochester N. Y., where Mr. Hall had large machine works and was making threshing machines, consisting of a crude horse power and a tub cylinder of wood with spikes driven in for teeth. There was no separator. Uncle Hiram contracted with Hall to have all the work done to put up two complete harvesters and in return Uncle agreed to plan a separator attachment to Hall's tub cylinder. Hall's pattern maker afterward went to Cincinnati and there fell in with McCormick and between them they got up the McCormick mowing machine and contracted with Seymour & Morgan of Brockport, N. Y., to manufacture them. Caleb Eldred, Jr., purchased the first one used in Climax in the fifties. I learned these facts from Uncle himself. In the fall of 1849 I went from Kent County to Climax, to look after his affairs on the farm during his absence in Washington. On arriving at Battle Creek in the stage, I found Mr. Morgan in the hotel enquiring for conveyance to Climax. I told him I was going there. He wanted to see Hiram Moore. I too. On the way up he gave me a history of the McCormick machines. Seymour & Morgan and McCormick had a falling out and Seymour & Morgan were then manufacturing mowers and reapers for themselves. Mr. Morgan was then going to get Uncle Hiram to invent some kind of a self-raking attachment to their reaper. Well, McCormick sued Seymour & Morgan for infringement of his patent. The suit came off in the United States court at Albany, N. Y. The old harvester or a model of it was brought in evidence and McCormick lost his case. He sued again and again on other points and again the old harvester beat him. He afterwards got judgment on the driver's seat.

In 1852, I think in October, during Uncle's absence in Washington, a stranger drove up from Battle Creek and requested me

Early Days in Climax.

to allow him to look at the harvester. I unlocked the doors and threw them wide open and left him. In about an hour I returned and found him taking notes. I asked him what he thought of it. 'It is a wonderful machine' said he 'and it does the most work with the least gearing of any machine I ever saw. I think McCormick must have seen this machine before ever he invented a reaper.' 'Why so,' said I, 'Well, Mr. Moore, I will be candid with you. I am the foreman of Mr. McCormick's machine shops in Chicago. He has had several costly suits with Seymour & Morgan at Albany and got beat every time by this harvester. Now he has sued again in the same court and the suit comes off in November. I have come expressly from Chicago to see if the bone of contention is in this old harvester and, by thunder, there it is and a much better one than in either of them.' He then pointed to the divider which separated the cut from the standing grain. 'Now,' said he, 'there is not a single important part of a reaper, or a threshing machine either, so far as I can judge, but can be found in this harvester. That is why I think McCormick saw it before he invented a reaper.'

It is difficult to determine from the evidence thus far at my disposal, how many harvesters were built or where. There is no doubt the first crude machine was put together at Flowerfield, at the home of C. S. Wheeler. It seems probable that the several parts were made in different places where mechanics could be found to do the work. Henry Bishop, an old-time resident of Prairie Ronde, says this machine was only a model. Isaac Smith of Charleston was for a long time in the employ of Moore as a mechanic at work on the harvester, and he told the writer that as many as three machines were built and put in operation on Prairie Ronde, which did not clean the grain but delivered it in boxes in the chaff. He says that he put in the first cleaning apparatus in a machine which they were accustomed to call the "experimenter" because Moore kept it to experiment with and test his inventions. Of the two machines made in Rochester, N. Y., one was for Senator Lyon. It remained in store at Rochester for two years when Mr. Lyon had it shipped to Prairie Ronde and put into operation. Lyon wrote to Moore from Buffalo May 4, 1839, as follows:—

"I have been to Rochester to get my harvesting machine from Mr. Filers, where you left it two years ago, and have this day shipped it on board brig Virginia, Capt. J. M. Douglass, Master, to St. Joseph. It consists of about 65 pieces of wood and boards and two barrels containing the bars and bolts belonging to them, so that the machine may be put together at St. Joseph and hauled to Prairie Ronde, if you think it worth the trouble and expense of doing so. I leave it with you to decide that point. Nobody but you will be able to put it together and if

Early Days in Climax.

it is prepared for use this season you will have to do it. Ira Lyon will go with his team to bring it to the Prairie as soon as you are ready, that is, if you think it is worth bringing. As to myself I must say that I have very little expectation that it ever will be worked to advantage anywhere and I would be very glad to have my money back again for my share of the invention. Not that I do not believe that grain may be harvested and threshed by machinery cheaper than it ever has been done by hand, for I do believe it and furthermore, I think the principle of your machine is correct and that it will lead to important results, but a machine to be useful on the farm must be far lighter and more manageable than the one I have been removing. It is too heavy and unwieldy for the average field, be it large or small, to be ever introduced into general use—at least it seems so to me. You, however, can judge much better than I in regard to the matter and I therefore leave it to you as to whether you will get the machine ready to use in the next harvest or not. I have forwarded the whole of it, except the gathering cylinder and the cylinder with which to carry off the straw, both of which I left because they were very large and because I supposed you thought them of little use. I, however, brought along the wheel and guide gear and teeth belonging to the former, and wheel and shaft and iron arms belonging to the latter, which may, perhaps, be used in the construction of something that will answer the purpose for which these cylinders were intended.”

Senator Lyon's forebodings were in a measure correct, and doubtless were shared in by Moore himself for when some years later he rode out on the Prairie Ronde with E. Lakin Brown and viewed the working of the first of the small reapers which was used there, he said to Brown, “That is the last of my harvesters,” or words to that effect. But the size of the machine was not the only reason, nor the main reason, why the machines did not come into general use in the East. But this is getting ahead of my story. Moore did get Lyon's machine “ready for the next harvest” and by fall the senator had entirely changed his mind about it.

On the 17th day of November, 1839, he wrote from Kalamazoo, to Henry L. Ellsworth, commissioner of patents, as follows: “There is no longer any doubt of the success of the Moore and Hascall harvesting machine. Mr. Moore has had a machine in the field on Prairie Ronde in this county during the past summer which harvested and threshed 63 acres of wheat in superior style and would have harvested 250 acres with the greatest ease, at the rate of 20 acres per day had it not been for one or two trifling accidents, the cause of which may easily be guarded against in the construction of machines hereafter. Twenty of the 63 acres were harvested on my farm and every expense attending it does not exceed one dollar per acre. A great number

Early Days in Climax.

of farmers witnessed its operation. All are entirely satisfied with its complete success and many in sowing their wheat this fall are calculating largely on the benefits to be derived from it next year. I have within the last three or four years advanced Mr. Moore between three and four thousand dollars to enable him to bring the machine as near perfection as possible and am much gratified at the result of his labors. The following are some of the improvements made by him in the winter of 1836-7 and publicly tested in the neighborhood of Rochester in the summer of 1837:—

1. A principle, or mode and fixture, for throwing the machine out of and into gear; which may be understandingly exhibited by plates and drafts.

2. A new method and fixture for starting and operating the sickle or cutter.

3. Revolving racks or endless aprons filled with teeth or spikes for bringing the grain to the cutter and when cut conveying the cut grain from the gathering cylinder to the thresher when the gathering cylinder is used to aid in gathering and cutting.

4. The revolving wire or net work screens for separating the threshed wheat from the straw and carrying off the latter from the machine.

5. A fender or retainer to prevent the loss of such wheat or grain as may be thrown over forward of the machine by the gathering apparatus.

All these improvements may be as well represented by drawings as in any other way and at the request of Mr. Moore I write to enquire whether they can not be patented without furnishing a model of them. I also beg leave to enquire whether a model of the original machine as it was patented can not be supplied at the expense of the department. If it can, the improvements can be added at little cost."

Until the advent of the small reapers about ten years later Moore continued making improvements on his harvester and constructed several machines, just how many I have not been able to learn. One of these machines was built for Andrew Y. Moore of Schoolcraft. Hiram Moore kept and operated one of them on his own and adjacent farms in Climax and may have also had one at Schoolcraft which was used in cutting grain for various farms in that vicinity. E. Lakin Brown told the writer that he employed Moore to harvest his wheat for several years in succession.

Moore was doubtless close run for money to make improvements on his machine, for I find that in 1840 he assigned to Rix Robinson and Lucius Lyon "4½ sixteenths each in all the improvements that may be made by Moore on Moore & Hascall's harvesting machine." This gave them the controlling interest in

Early Days in Climax.

the improvements. On August 6th, 1841, Hascall assigned to Lucius Lyon all the interest he held in the Moore & Hascall patents for harvesting machines. The consideration was \$100 in cash, \$200 in the personal notes of E. Ransom and Lucius Lyon, and \$5,000 to be paid out of the profits from sales and manufacture of machines. The \$5,000 from profits never materialized, and Hascall was that much out.

The next day after the transfer from Hascall to Lyon the latter wrote to the Commissioner of Patents: "We have had our harvesting machines in the field and mine has harvested 150 acres without much delay for alterations, and I have no doubt the invention will ultimately prove one of the most important labor saving inventions ever brought into use, but the operation of cutting, threshing, and cleaning the grain in the field, all at one time, is so complex and the harvest season, which is the only season for experiments, so short that it will take some years yet to perfect it so as to make it profitable. The expense is so great that Hascall has broke down and I have been compelled to buy his interest. In the meantime six years of the patents have passed, and as there can be no profit arising from the invention for at least three or four years, there is but small inducement to go on and perfect it unless the patent can be extended to the end of twenty-one years;" and he asked to have the patent extended.

A few days later he wrote to Arthur Bronson asking him to take an interest in the machine, which Bronson declined. In this letter he said: "Two of the machines were operated during the last harvest and worked most admirably and are now in as good or better condition than before they were used. When the machines are driven with an ordinary degree of care, nearly every grain of wheat is saved, while under the old method fully one fifth was lost. Ira Lyon operated one of these machines and after paying all expenses cleared about \$300, which is more than fifty per cent on the cost of the machine. In addition to saving one fifth of the grain, he harvested and threshed at \$3 an acre, while the usual cost was \$5 an acre. The machine will work well on any ground that is free from large stones and stumps and may be operated by any man of ordinary common sense after two days' experience." This was written in August, 1841.

Isaac Smith tells me that he began work for Moore that year and built three machines. It is probable that the castings for these machines were made at Battle Creek at the foundry of Jewell & Rockwell. These machines were built during the seven years that Smith worked for Moore. One of them was the "Experimenter" referred to in a former article. Another was the machine made for Andrew Y. Moore of Schoolcraft. This machine was used for a time in Schoolcraft and afterward taken to California by Kidwell Moore, a son of Andrew Y. Moore, and

Early Days in Climax.

George Leeland in 1849. It went by way of New York and around Cape Horn, and when it got to California the freight charges were so great that it came near being sold to pay the freight. They succeeded, however, in saving the machine, and under the conditions prevailing there it proved a great success and machines modeled after it are largely in use there now.

Among those who used the machine before it left Schoolcraft were Andrew Y. Moore's son, O. H. Moore, who was afterward colonel of the 25th Michigan Infantry and who, with his regiment (among whom were B. F. Travis, Homer Elwell, and other Climax boys) gave the rebel General John Morgan and his army a beautiful drubbing at the battle of Tebbs Bend, Kentucky, one Fourth of July morning thirty-eight years ago. Another man who helped to run that machine was David Hamilton of Pavilion, father of our townsman, Glenn Hamilton, who worked for Andrew Y. Moore for about three seasons. At one time Hamilton took a load of wheat directly from the machine to the grist mill in Prairie Ronde, had it ground and put into five barrels, whence he took it with all speed to Kalamazoo and had it shipped over the Michigan Central Railroad to New York City, just to show the New York folks what could be done, and to advertise the machines.

The late Rev. S. C. Hodgman wrote me: "I remember seeing one of the machines, the second one, I think, that was made on Moore's place. I remember seeing it harvest over 1,100 bushels from twenty-six acres one Sunday. The machine was not a success in Michigan on account of the shortness of the time in which it could be used. The wheat must be in just the right condition, fully ripe and perfectly dry. A crop might be lost while waiting for the proper conditions." This is the main reason why the harvester was not a success in Michigan. The whole story is told in the words, "climatic conditions." The harvester could not be started in the morning until the dew was off, and it must be stopped when the dew began to fall at night. About eight hours per day was all that could be depended on for work. If there were green spots in the wheat they must be skipped. If the wheat was damp and unripe, it would spoil in the bin. But in the dry region of the West, there is nothing of this kind to contend with, and there the harvester found its congenial home, and is still doing its work.

After Moore moved to Wisconsin he had his harvester sent him, and it was used there for a time. The remains of the old "Experimenter" are some of them still knocking about the old farm at Climax. The sight of the great harvester with its long row of horses moving majestically about the field, pouring out the clean wheat in bags as fast as two men could tie them, and faster than two teams could draw them to the granary, was an

Early Days in Climax.

inspiring one to the imagination of such a lad as I was when I witnessed it, and it seemed to affect others in the the same way. Hundreds came from far and near to see the great sight, many of whom are yet living, but all past the half-century mark. E. Lakin Brown, to whom reference has been made, was inspired by it to write his poem, "Harvest Time in Prairie Ronde," in which he gives a graphic description of the great harvester at its work on the big prairie.

There is little to be added to the history of the harvester. The advent of the small reapers drawn by single team effectually ended all hope of the use of the harvester outside of the dry regions of the West, and with the exception of the machine sent to California, and perhaps Moore's own machine in Wisconsin, the big harvesters were suffered to rot down wherever they happened to be. Perhaps the same fate has befallen these two in the more than half a century that has passed since they were built.

My father was a shoemaker, and lived for several years on a little two-acre lot out of the southwest corner of Moore's farm. I often saw Mr. Moore, and knew him as well as a little lad usually knows a man and a neighbor. He spent many an hour in father's shop, and chatted while father sewed the seams and hammered the leather and drove the pegs which made the footwear of the neighborhood, and I sat by and listened. I can not now recall any particular conversation, but I well remember the appearance of the man at one time as he made a part of a picture which was indelibly impressed on my youthful memory. Father's shop was in a low, one story lean-to on the north side of the house. His bench was where he could get the best light from the window. Beneath the window on the outside was a rain barrel to catch the falling water from the eaves. One day as Moore sat in the shop with his back to the window and close to it, something attracted our attention, and looking up to the window we saw a big snake swaying back and forth with the lower part of its body resting around the top of the barrel and its head reaching nearly to the eaves, as if it were trying to climb upon the house. Whenever I think of it I can see that window with Mr. Moore on the inside and the huge serpent swaying on the outside as plainly as though it were but yesterday. My older brother took Mr. Moore's cane (made from a broom handle) as the handiest weapon, and quickly brought down the snake—and broke the cane as well. It was a blacksnake six feet and eight inches long. It was hung up as a trophy from a limb of a crab-apple tree near the roadside.

This older brother wrote me as follows in regard to Mr. Moore and his family: "Moore was a very pleasant man, well informed on general subjects, and, if I remember correctly, was a

Early Days in Climax.

Democrat. His house was a very pleasant place to visit, one of its rules being to never speak ill of a person. If any one began to speak of some one's evil qualities, they were always offset if possible by some good quality that the person possessed. I can also remember that Mrs. Moore made splendid mince pies. She was one of the very few women who understood that art to perfection, and could make them exactly right."

Moore was away from home a great deal of the time from 1834 to 1853, spending long periods at Schoolcraft, Battle Creek, Rochester, Washington, and other places, at work on his harvester and seeking to get his patent renewed. At Schoolcraft one of his intimate friends was the Hon. E. Lakin Brown. At Battle Creek the late Congressman George Willard was one of his friends and admirers. At that time Mr. Willard was the rector of St. Thomas Episcopal Church, of which both Mr. Moore's and my father's families were members. In speaking of Mr. Moore, Mr. Willard said to me, "He was a delightful man to converse with. He possessed a great fund of general information, and was the only Democrat of that time that I had ever met who could give an intelligent reason for his political faith. I once listened to an argument which he held with Dr. Balcomb, who was at that time postmaster of Battle Creek, which has impressed me to this day. Both were strongly intellectual men, and marshaled their facts and stated their arguments in a masterly way. Balcomb held that as a whole the world did not advance any,—that there were periods of advancement followed by retrogression, a sort of swaying back and forth, but, at the last, men were no wiser, stronger, or better than they were unknown ages ago. Moore held the opposite view, and the way he stated his facts and upheld his position influenced my whole later life."

Moore was elected to the Legislature in 1849, and represented the Kalamazoo district in the House. In 1853 he sold his Climax farm to D. C. Reed, and moved to Wisconsin, where he had previously located land on Green Lake Prairie, in Green Lake County. The remainder of his life was spent there improving his lands and inventing various farm implements. He died May 5, 1875. I quote the following extracts from an obituary notice in the *Kalamazoo Telegraph*: "Mr. Moore was a man of great energy, and took a very active interest in the development of the new territory. He was a man of much literary taste and culture, and of marked ability; a prominent Democrat of the Jeffersonian school, thoroughly versed in all the essential doctrines of the party. He was the inventor of the first harvesting machine, the same that was used on Prairie Ronde so successfully for many years, and spent a large fortune in trying to perfect it. He went to Wisconsin some twenty years ago, and entered a large tract of excellent land, and began farming on a large scale. He had 600

Early Days in Climax.

acres of wheat, with horses, stock, etc. He was all the time studying and bringing out new inventions, seeding machines, corn planters, hay rakes, and many other useful articles." This notice brought out the following article from E. Lakin Brown, with which I close this sketch of the first harvesting machine and its inventor:—

"Hiram Moore, whose death on the 5th inst. at Brandon, Wis., is noticed in yesterday's *Telegraph*, was a most remarkable man. His harvesting machine, which for the eight or ten years preceding 1850, harvested so many of the great wheat fields of Prairie Ronde, was undoubtedly the earliest, as it was by far the most perfect, in the work it performed, of all the brood of reapers and harvesters that inventive skill has brought to the aid of the farmer. Many of our old citizens will remember the huge harvester drawn by sixteen horses, moving majestically around the field of ripe wheat, cutting a swath fourteen feet wide clean and even, carrying the grain into the cylinder by means of an endless apron, the wheat coming out threshed and winnowed, and filling the bags as fast as they could be tied and exchanged at the delivery spout, and all this for years before a reaper was ever seen or heard of on the prairie. But the simple reaper, every way inferior as an invention, has for various reasons superseded the great harvester, and its inventor, like so many others, was fated to see inferior men with one fourth his ability take the fame and fortune which his invention only served to indicate to them. Moore was a man most genial and social in his habits and feelings, fond of society, positive in his opinions, and fond of defending them. His political opinions were the most ultra-democratic. General Jackson was his ideal statesman, and the Democratic party never, in his opinion, varied a hair from Jackson democracy. The writer of this had his most intimate acquaintance and friendship, and although he has been absent from the State more than twenty years, the news of his death thrills a chord that so vibrates but seldom in one's life."

The Ide Building.

THE building which for many years has been known as the Ide Building was built by Wm. E. Sawyer, in 1856, and was, at that time, the finest building anywhere near Climax Corners. It was built for both a store and a dwelling, with a hall for public uses over the store. This hall, known as Union Hall, was used for all sorts of gatherings — religious meetings and dances, singing school, political meetings, and schoolroom. The Good Templars, Masons, Odd Fellows, and Grangers each in turn used it for a lodge room. Sawyer lived in the building and kept the store until just before the Civil War, when he moved to California, leaving his property in the hands of his son-in-law, M. S. Bowen, who had there wooed and won his bride. Bowen was a lawyer, but he ran the store for a year or two, when it was sold to D. H. Daniels, who kept the store until about the close of the war. Then it came into the possession of John B. Ide, in whose family it remained for a great many years, until finally transferred to T. B. Eldred. It would take a pretty long article to chronicle even briefly all the occupants and the varied uses to which the building has been put since Sawyer built it. Some of them are referred to in the verses.

How many a tale this old building could tell
Of strange things it has known in its day,
Of things that have happened within its old shell,
And now passed from our knowledge away.

Of the folks who have dwelt in its sheltering fold;
Of the artisans plying their trades;
Of the orgies and rites and the creepy things told
At the lodge in its mystical shades.

Here the merchant hath measured his yards of cloth,
The cobbler hath cobbled his shoes;
The lover hath plighted his solemn troth,
And the printer hath printed the news.

The doctor hath dealt out his doses of pills;
The milliner fashioned her hats;
The druggist hath furnished the poison that kills,
And the housekeeper poisoned the rats.

Early Days in Climax.

The fiddler hath fiddled while others have danced;
The singer hath sung his best tune;
The boy on his broomstick hath capered and pranced,
And the baby has cried for the moon.

Good Templars have told of the curses of rum,
And the rumseller sold by the drinks;
The Free Mason here to his lodgeroom hath come,
And the Odd Fellow put up his links.

The soldier hath gone from its halls to the wars,
And the women have cheered him away;
The Granger led blindfolded men o'er the bars,
And the preacher hath taught men to pray.

The teacher hath taught and the pupil hath learned,
And the butcher hath handled his beef;
At midnight his candle the lawyer has burned,
As he studied the points of his brief.

The builder who built it, he builded it well;
A mansion it seemed in a way;
Now, nobody living its story can tell,
Or of all it has seen in its day.

Its walls are now battered and spotted and worn:
No longer we view it with pride,
As we did in the days ere its glory was shorn —
Days of Sawyer and Bowen and Daniels and Ide.

When I Was a Boy.

I.

THINGS are not as they used to be. They never are. The boy now has little idea of the little details of everyday life as they were when his father was a boy. When I was a boy a fellow could not properly make his advent into this world without all the old women in the neighborhood being present to assist at the ceremony. Nor could he get out of it any easier. Even after the spirit was supposed to have taken its departure, some young man and maiden were called in to sit up nights and see that it did not come back again. Then they did not have burial caskets. The nearest or best carpenter just made a coffin from the best materials at hand, black walnut or cherry lumber, and the body was laid away in that. When I was a boy Joe Riddle made most of the coffins used around Climax. In those days they did not have kerosene lamps nor gas lights nor electric lights to sit up nights by,—only tallow candles. Matches were not so good or plenty as now, so if the candle went out the sitters-up would sometimes have to make a match of their own, if they had one. They were generally equal to the emergency. When I was a boy I had to help make the tallow candles which were used in the family. Father would buy the candle-wicking in balls at the store, and mother would cut it into lengths of a little less than two feet. Then I would have to double and twist the wicking and slip the wicks onto little straight smooth rods a foot or more long, spacing the wicks a little more than an inch apart. In the meantime a kettle of tallow would be melted and the wicks would be dipped into the tallow and set aside to cool and drip. There were enough sticks full of wicks so that by the time the last one was dipped the first one would have the tallow cool and be ready to dip again. So they kept it going until by successive dippings in the melted tallow the candles had grown as big as desired. As the tallow disappeared from the kettle its place was supplied with water, which did not hinder the process in the least. When I was a boy people had fireplaces in their houses in which they burned big logs of wood three or four feet or more in length, with brass-mounted andirons to hold the wood up from the brick hearth. And there was an iron crane in the fireplace to hang pots and kettles on, and an oven to set in front of the fire to bake bread in, or an iron kettle with a heavy iron cover to put in the

Early Days in Climax.

fire and cover up with live coals for the same purpose. When I was a boy they hung their Thanksgiving turkey up in front of the fireplace to roast, and the boy had to keep it turning so it would cook evenly on all sides. When I was a boy the wealthier farmers had big ovens outside their houses, built of brick, and they would bake up enough mince pies at once to last all winter if boys were not too plenty. When I was a boy we used to play with a soft ball which we made ourselves of yarn and covered with leather. We played one-old-cat and two-old-cat and baseball. We ran races and wrestled and jumped and played "pom pom pull away," "gool," "I spy," "snap the whip," "old bloody Tom," "ring around a rosy," "button, button, who's got the button?" and the "needle's eye," and more games like them. Well, well, as I think it over, I guess the children's plays are as near as anything like what they used to be.

II

This snapping cold morning with no snow on the ground and a strong bracing air, brings to mind my boyhood days when, with the first advent of such a morning, we boys took our skates and made a break for some of the shallow ponds, to have a jolly time skating. There were half a dozen or more of those little ponds within easy reach, and on such a morning as this they would be coated over with ice stout enough to hold us up, even if it did bend when we passed over it. It was the clear crystal, tough, and as smooth and glairy as a looking-glass. Those little ponds are pretty much all dried up now, and even "Tom's Lake," which made such a royal skating park when I was a boy, has been drained out till it is nothing but an almost useless marsh. It will never again see such jolly skating parties as used to gather there when I was a boy. We don't see any more such skates as we used to wear in those days, with their narrow creased bottoms and long toes curled over the foot. Neither do we find so many good skaters. Then every boy who was big enough had his skates, and the way they slid over the ice backward and forward, and cut all sorts of curlycues was the very poetry of motion. When those little ponds, which made ideal skating parks, dried up or were drained out, it seemed to dry up the skating also, for the deep lakes rarely freeze over so smoothly or afford as good skating as the shallow ponds used to, so that there is much less opportunity for the boys to skate than there used to be.

As the boys of those days excelled those of to-day in skating, so they did in most athletic sports and exercises — running, jumping, wrestling, pulling sticks, and the like. There was never a recess or a nooning at school when some or all these games were not going on with all the vim and energy the boys could put into

Early Days in Climax.

them. Some of these sports seem to be obsolete now in our playgrounds. We used to wrestle at "square hold," "side hold," "back hold," and "rough-and-tumble," in those days, but they have largely gone out of date now. I have not seen a pair of school boys have a wrestle at "square hold" in so long that I have forgotten when it was. As a rule boys worked harder and played harder in those days than they do now. Did they study harder? Well, I don't know about that. I think not. We did not study so many things as boys do now, but what we did study we learned better, at least I think so. Pretty nearly all the studies we had then were reading, writing, spelling, arithmetic, grammar, and geography, and we put our whole school work into those studies. We were not required to have some mere smatterer try to teach us some ancient language which was dead and buried ages ago. We were not taught Latin or Greek or Hebrew or Sanscrit, but we were taught how to spell, and if the editor of a newspaper had misspelled the word "litigation" three times in one short item, as one of the Galesburg papers did the other day, there was hardly a child ten years old in school but would have picked him up on it. In those days every scholar had to spell at least twice a day in class. Then at least once in every two weeks half a day was spent in spelling matches and declamations. For then we only had every other Saturday for holiday, and Saturday afternoons were spent in spelling and declaiming. And then we used to have spelling schools when the evenings were long, and not a week passed by but what we all went to one or more spelling schools in our own district or some other. The constant drill and rivalry between schools made good spellers of nearly everybody. Now the spelling matches and the spelling schools have disappeared as completely as have the little skating ponds, and good spellers are as scarce as good skaters or good wrestlers.

III.

When I was a little boy there was not a church building in the town of Climax. People used to go to meeting just the same. Sometimes it was in private houses, but generally in the old wooden schoolhouse on the hill by the graveyard. There were not many people in the graveyard then, and the schoolboys used to go over there in winter and slide down hill on their home-made handsleds.

A good many preachers used to preach in the old schoolhouse, but the only one I can remember particularly was Elder Harris, who preached for the Baptists off and on a good many years, both before and after the church was built. In those days people, both old and young, behaved themselves with respect and propriety during services, and if any of them were caught whispering and

Early Days in Climax.

laughing, or making a disturbance in meeting, they had speedy cause to repent it. Now the youngsters cut up all they want to in meeting. It is even told that they played cards in one of our church during services. I hope that it is not true. It was not so when I was a boy. I was once greatly scandalized by a man who came into meeting in the old schoolhouse and sat down on the bench beside me without taking off his hat. I thought surely he would take it off when the services began, but he did not. He just sat there like a bump on a log, and paid no attention to his hat. I stood it as long as I thought I could, and then I leaned over and touched him, and said to him in a whisper, "Won't you please take off your hat?" I guess everybody heard me, for they all smiled except the man who wore the hat. It never phased him a particle, and the hat staid on. I was reprimanded for whispering in meeting, and was told afterward that the man was a Quaker, and that the Quakers never take off their hats in meeting.

When I was a boy the people of Climax did not make any great observance of Christmas or New Year's. Many of them were of New England descent, and had not entirely got over the effects of the old Puritan belief that Christmas trees and Christmas festivities were wicked emblems of popery, not to be indulged in by Protestants. I never saw a Christmas tree until I was a man grown. And yet Christmas did not pass entirely without observance. "Wish you Merry Christmas," or "Happy New Year," were always the first cheerful greetings of the holidays. On Christmas eve the little folks hung up their stockings by the fireplace or behind the stove, so that they would be handy for Santa Claus when he came down the chimney. He was pretty sure to come in the night and deposit candy or raisins or home-made dolls, or something else to make the little ones' hearts happy. And Christmas was a day to go hunting or skating. If the sleighing was good, and it generally was, the goose-neck cutters and the pungs and the long sleighs would come out, and the young folks, packed away like sardines among the straw and the blankets and the buffalo robes, would have a sleighing party, and like enough before they got back they would have been to Austin Lake, or Hickory Corners, or some other favorite resort, to a dance, and had the jolliest time that ever was, and never got home till morning.

IV.

Very many of the recollections of my childhood gather around the old wood schoolhouse on the hill, and its successor, the brick one which stood on the site now occupied by the Pierce Cemetery.

Early Days in Climax.

It was in the old wood schoolhouse that I first went to school, in the fall of 1843.

The entire forty-acre lot back of the schoolhouse was covered with woods,—big trees and little ones, and hazel brush. In the corner next to the schoolhouse was a small cleared spot which we used for a playground, and next to it was quite a large patch of hazel brush. It was out of this patch of brush that the two bears jumped into the road just in front of George Lawrence and I on the morning of the historic bear hunt.

Probably no person has a more prominent place in the memories of the school children of those days than "Grandpa." He was really and truly grandpa to at least half the scholars, and grandpa by courtesy to all the rest. To the older folks he was the "Old Judge." He was a great favorite among the smaller kids, for he seldom went around without some candy or raisins in his pockets, and the little ones who met him were sure to share it with him or take the whole. He had an apple orchard, in which grew all sorts of apples common in those days—early harvests, sweet boughs, maiden blushes, pearmaines, pippins, russets, spitzenbergs, snow apples, greenings, and I don't know how many more. One tree bore apples which had a red flesh, the "red insides," as we used to call them. Most of the old trees are gone, but a few of them are still standing at the Baptist parsonage and on adjacent lots. In those days the fungi and the worms had not begun to affect the apples, and they grew much larger and finer than they do under present conditions. One tree that bore beautiful golden harvest apples grew near where P. S. Gould's house now stands. It was the first tree to ripen its apples, and standing near the road it was a great temptation to every one, for fruit was not so plenty in those days as it has been since. And not a few people, both old and young, climbed over the old rail fence and helped themselves to what apples they wanted to eat. But as soon as these early apples were ripe, grandpa would gather a bushel or so of them, and bring them up to the old schoolhouse and distribute them among the scholars; and then, did not we have a jolly time? After that only a few of the children would steal his apples. But there were some inveterate fruit thieves then as there are now, whom no sense of honor or of shame would keep from stealing.

Grandpa was a good strong Baptist, and when the time came to build a meeting-house, he gave the site, and later he built the parsonage and gave it to the church. And then he gave a man an acre and a-half of land to train and lead the choir. And that reminds me of Festus Hall, the man employed. He built the house now known as the Buckberry House on the land thus paid for. He was a shoemaker, and sometimes worked for himself, but more of the time worked in the shop for my father. He was a

Early Days in Climax.

fine singer, and had a family of girls who were also singers, as well as school teachers. One of them, Diana Hall, was teaching our district school fifty years ago to-day. She was a brilliant young woman of striking appearance, who would command attention anywhere. Hall moved to South Bend, Ind., about fifty years ago. He did not live very long after he went there. Consumption already had its hold on him when he went from here. He kept up a regular correspondence with my father as long as he lived. One day not very long ago I came across one of his letters, written but a short time before his death. It was so full of Christian hope for the future, of deep abiding friendship for my father and of resignation under his earthly trials, that it brought the hot tears to my eyes. These men have been under the sod for many long years, but truly their works live after them.

V

As I said before, things are not as they used to be. Among progressive people they never are, and we Yankees and the Japanese are progressive, if we are anything. We have moved along so fast that when I think back to the time when I was a boy, I can hardly recognize myself as the little boy who, at ten years of age, began working out on the neighboring farms by the day and by the month.

As riches are counted nowadays, father was a poor man, and his boys had to work as soon as they were big enough. They had to churn with the old-fashioned dasher churn on churning days, and pound the clothes for mother, in the pounding barrel, on Mondays, and how they did hate both jobs.

In the spring they had to prepare beds in the garden and plant the lettuce, and the radishes, and the cabbage, and the onion seed, and the rest of the garden truck. Then, as soon as the plants were big enough, the boys had to go at it with hoes and fingers, and clean out the weeds. It was a backaching job, and we did not like it much better than we did churning and pounding clothes.

When corn planting began, we began to work out. Corn is not planted any more as we used to do it. Then a man had a planting bag with the seed corn in it, which hung at his waist, and a hoe in his hand, and he dropped the corn and covered it as he went along. But when they wanted to expedite matters, the boy was brought in and dropped the corn for the men to cover. I have often dropped the corn as fast as two men could cover it, and Hod Pierce would drop for three. The corn was dropped quite as uniformly as the machines will drop it now.

Then came the cultivating, which was not so very different from the present practise with a one-horse cultivator, only the

Early Days in Climax.

boy generally rode the horse and relieved the man of the trouble of guiding the animal. That was not so hard on the boy, but it used to get pretty tiresome in the hot days of June and July, when the horse was hot and sweaty. It is a long time since I saw a boy ride a horse to cultivate corn in the field.

There is another job which, as a boy, I used to do in the corn-field, which seems to be out of date. One farmer I worked for always gave his corn a top-dressing of fertilizer. He used to drive every winter to Grand Rapids and get a supply of plaster. Some of this he mixed with salt and ashes and hen manure, and when the corn was about six inches high, it was given a dressing of this mixture, about a tablespoonful to a hill. That was another job that I hated, for it was hard, heavy, stinking, dirty work for me.

Then came the haying. The grass was all cut by hand with scythes. The men would go out into the field, sometimes a dozen of them together, each with his scythe well sharpened, and a whetstone in his pocket or boot leg, and they would mow until the middle of the forenoon, or later, according to the weather.

The boy's job was to carry water to the men, and to spread as much hay from the swath as he could, shaking it up lightly and spreading it evenly over the ground. When the men had mowed enough for the day they turned in with their forks and finished spreading it out. This was done usually before dinner.

After dinner the hay was turned over and shook out again, and then part of the men raked it by hand into winrows, while the rest put it in cocks or drew it from the winrows to the stack or barn. The boy followed behind, and raked up the last scatterings. The loads were unloaded by hand, and the boy on the stack passed the hay back to the stacker or in the mow, wallowed and trod it down.

Verily, if farmers now had to make hay without the mowing machine, the tedder, the horse rake, and the horse fork, there would have to be more people or less hay.

VI.

Yesterday my women folks went over to the parsonage to a missionary meeting. When they came back, they said there were only half a dozen or so there, and that their feet were nearly frozen on the cold floor. "Well," I partly said and partly thought to myself, "what else can you expect? Here is a man who has a family to provide for. He must feed them and warm them, and clothe both himself and them in such style that his people need not be ashamed of them when they appear in public. He must contribute to every benevolent purpose for which he is called on. And he has to do it all on a salary of a dollar a day or less.

Early Days in Climax.

No wonder your feet got cold. And if it was hard for you to endure for an afternoon, how about the minister and his family?"

That set me to thinking about the days when I was a boy, and of the story that one of the boys told in the *Cereal* of the sequel to that sleigh ride forty-six years ago, and of what happened at that same parsonage.

In matters of religion, things have changed in Climax since I was a boy as much as they have in everything else. They used to have donation parties in those days that amounted to something. There were not nearly so many people here then as there are now, and people were not any wealthier than they are now, but they went to donation parties and they went to give. A hundred dollars was a small donation in those days, and oftener it came nearer two hundred. They kept it up till after I was a pretty big boy, big enough to ride around the country with my best girl. On a number of occasions I have taken her in a cutter and come less than a dozen miles from a neighboring village to attend a Climax donation party. And there were lots of people there. The houses were crowded, and they had the jolliest kind of a time. They had a supper such as nobody better than Climax people know how to get up, and everybody was expected to partake of it. Every last one of them, whether they helped provide the supper nor not, paid their little fifty cents for the meal, and never thought of grumbling. It was all for the pastor. Nowadays some good Christian members of the church feel it a hardship to pay ten cents for a meal, and some go home without their suppers, although the proceeds are to be applied in the Lord's service. And there are even some who stay away from church and refuse to contribute to the pastor's salary because they do not like the man, or because he reads his sermons, or because his manner of delivering them does not suit their taste. And he has to live and support a family on a dollar a day. Well, I am not a church member of that or any other sort, and I suppose that is the reason why I feel like throwing stones at those who are, but who seem to act on the principle that atheists do, of trying to get all they can out of this life and let the future go to—the other place. And yet there are a good many people both in and out of the church who find that the purest, sweetest, and most enduring pleasures in this life are found in doing good to others.

History Room
Not For Loan

. 809016

REFERENCE DEPARTMENT
KALAMAZOO PUBLIC LIBRARY
KALAMAZOO, MICHIGAN

HISTORY ROOM